Amendments to the Claims:

1-15. (cancelled)

16. (currently amended) An internal combustion engine having an exhaust-gas purification system, comprising:

a nitrogen oxide storage catalytic converter; and

a SCR catalytic converter downstream of the nitrogen oxide storage catalytic converter; and

a control unit, wherein the control unit is programmed to supply the nitrogen oxide storage catalytic converter

in a first operating mode with exhaust gas from the internal combustion engine containing an excess of oxidizing constituents,

in a second operating mode with exhaust gas containing an excess of reducing constituents, and

in a third operating mode, established for a predetermined period after the first operating mode and before the second operating mode, with [[an]] a constant exhaust gas composition which has a lower content of oxidizing constituents than the first operating mode and a lower content of reducing constituents than the second operating mode.

17. (previously presented) The exhaust-gas purification system as set forth in claim 16, wherein the nitrogen oxide storage catalytic converter includes a first nitrogen oxide storage catalytic converter element and a second nitrogen

oxide storage catalytic converter element connected in parallel with the first nitrogen oxide storage catalytic converter element.

18. (previously presented) The exhaust-gas purification system as claimed in claim 17, wherein the first nitrogen oxide storage catalytic converter element and the second nitrogen oxide storage catalytic converter element are operable alternately either in the first operating mode or in the second operating mode and third operating mode.

19. (previously presented) The exhaust-gas purification system as claimed in claim 17, further comprising:

a switching device,

wherein when the nitrogen oxide storage catalytic converter element is operating in at least one of the second operating mode and the third operating mode, the switching device is operable to at least partially isolate the nitrogen oxide storage catalytic converter elements from the exhaust gas.

20. (previously presented) The exhaust-gas purification system as claimed in claim 18, further comprising:

a switching device,

wherein when the nitrogen oxide storage catalytic converter element is operating in at least one of the second operating mode and the third operating

mode, the switching device is operable to at least partially isolate the nitrogen oxide storage catalytic converter elements from the exhaust gas.

21. (previously presented) The exhaust-gas purification system as claimed 16, further comprising:

a gas delivery device,

wherein the gas delivery device is operable to deliver a gas stream to the nitrogen oxide storage catalytic converter when the nitrogen oxide storage catalytic converter is operating in at least one of the second operating mode and the third operating mode.

22. (previously presented) The exhaust-gas purification system as claimed 19, further comprising:

a gas delivery device,

wherein the gas delivery device is operable to deliver a gas stream to the nitrogen oxide storage catalytic converter when the nitrogen oxide storage catalytic converter is operating in at least one of the second operating mode and the third operating mode.

23. (previously presented) The exhaust-gas purification system as claimed in claim 21, wherein the gas stream delivered by the gas delivery device is a low-oxygen gas stream.

24. (previously presented) The exhaust-gas purification system as claimed in claim 21, wherein the gas delivery device is fuel reformer or a burner.

25. (previously presented) The exhaust-gas purification system as claimed in claim 23, wherein the gas delivery device is fuel reformer or a burner.

26. (previously presented) The exhaust-gas purification system as claimed in claim 16, further comprising:

an oxidation catalytic converter element connected upstream of the nitrogen oxide storage catalytic converter.

27. (previously presented) The exhaust-gas purification system as claimed in claim 16, further comprising a particulate filter connected upstream of the SCR catalytic converter.

28. (currently amended) A method for purifying the exhaust gas from an internal combustion engine having an exhaust-gas purification system including a nitrogen oxide storage catalytic converter and an SCR catalytic converter downstream of the nitrogen oxide storage catalytic converter, comprising the steps of:

supplying the nitrogen oxide storage catalytic converter with exhaust gas containing an excess of oxidizing constituents;

supplying the nitrogen oxide storage catalytic converter with exhaust gas containing an excess of reducing constituents; and

supplying the nitrogen oxide storage catalytic converter, between the oxidizing constituents supplying step and the reducing constituents supplying step, for a predetermined period with [[an]] a constant exhaust gas composition which has a lower content of oxidizing constituents than in the oxidizing constituents supplying step and a lower content of reducing constituents than in the reducing constituents supplying step.

29. (currently amended) A [[The]] method ~~as claimed in claim 28,~~ for purifying the exhaust gas from an internal combustion engine having an exhaust-gas purification system including a nitrogen oxide storage catalytic converter and an SCR catalytic converter downstream of the nitrogen oxide storage catalytic converter, comprising the steps of:

supplying the nitrogen oxide storage catalytic converter with exhaust gas containing an excess of oxidizing constituents;

supplying the nitrogen oxide storage catalytic converter with exhaust gas containing an excess of reducing constituents; and

supplying the nitrogen oxide storage catalytic converter, between the oxidizing constituents supplying step and the reducing constituents supplying step, with an exhaust gas which has a lower content of oxidizing constituents than in the oxidizing constituents supplying step and a lower content of reducing constituents than in the reducing constituents supplying step.

wherein the step between the oxidizing constituents supplying step and the reducing constituents supplying step is terminated at the earliest when the nitrogen oxide storage catalytic converter is predominantly filled by exhaust gas delivered in step between the oxidizing constituents supplying step and the reducing constituents supplying step.

30. (previously presented) The method as claimed in claim 28, wherein

the nitrogen oxide storage catalytic converter is formed as a parallel arrangement of a first nitrogen oxide storage catalytic converter element and a second nitrogen oxide storage catalytic converter element, and

the first nitrogen oxide storage catalytic converter element and the second nitrogen oxide storage catalytic converter element are operated alternately by switching of a switching device arranged to selectively direct exhaust gas into said elements.

31. (previously presented) The method as claimed in claim 29, wherein

the nitrogen oxide storage catalytic converter is formed as a parallel arrangement of a first nitrogen oxide storage catalytic converter element and a second nitrogen oxide storage catalytic converter element, and

the first nitrogen oxide storage catalytic converter element and the second nitrogen oxide storage catalytic converter element are operated alternately by switching of a switching device arranged to selectively direct exhaust gas into said elements.

32. (previously presented) The method as claimed in claim 28, wherein exhaust gas is supplied to the nitrogen oxide storage catalytic converter in at least one of the reducing constituents supplying step and the step between the oxidizing constituents supplying step and the reducing constituents supplying step is at least partially delivered by a gas delivery unit, said gas delivery unit being a fuel reformer or a burner.

33. (previously presented) The method as claimed in claim 28, wherein an oxygen content of the exhaust gas is catalytically lowered upstream of the nitrogen oxide storage catalytic converter in the reducing constituents supplying step and the step between the oxidizing constituents supplying step and the reducing constituents supplying step.

34. (currently amended) The method as claimed in claim 32, wherein a temperature of the nitrogen oxide storage catalytic converter element is controlled by adjusting [[the]] a switching device.

35. (currently amended) The method as claimed in claim 33, wherein a temperature of the nitrogen oxide storage catalytic converter element is controlled by adjusting [[the]] a switching device.

36. (new) The method as claimed in claim 28, wherein in step of supplying the nitrogen oxide storage catalytic converter between the oxidizing constituents supplying step and the reducing constituents supplying step, an air/fuel ratio which set to control exhaust gas composition is set to be slightly greater than 1, such that the oxidizing constituents in the exhaust gas have an oxygen excess of 1% or less.

37. (new) The method as claimed in claim 36, wherein the air/fuel ratio is approximately 1.05.

38. (new) The exhaust-gas purification system as set forth in claim 16, wherein in the third operating mode, the controller sets an air/fuel ratio to be slightly greater than 1, such that the oxidizing constituents have an oxygen excess of 1% or less.

39. (new) The exhaust-gas purification system as set forth in claim 38, wherein the air/fuel ratio is approximately 1.05.